Indian English Crime Fiction by the Contemporary Women Writers: A Critical Study

Synopsis

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1. Introduction

Crime fiction is one of the most popular forms of fiction today. It generally includes a crime, a criminal, a victim and an investigator who sometimes is a detective or a policeman. Society has always been interested in crime investigation, its motives and consequences. Due to people's interest crime fiction emerged as a new genre in nineteenth century and soon became a part and parcel of popular literature. Crime fiction like other popular literature changes with time and reflects cultural and social shifts in the society. Thus, crime fiction is a mirror of contemporary society and its values.

Crime fiction evolved and flourished in the nineteenth century European countries. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional investigator Sherlock Holmes is still a legend. Many authors drew inspiration from him. In the early twentieth century women also tried their hand on crime fiction. Agatha Christie is one of the renowned women writers of crime fiction. The works of new crime fiction women writers were inspired by male writers and investigators. They were less popular rather ignored by critics. Crime fiction was popularized in Indian in the early twentieth century by the works of Bengali writers. Saradindu Bandopadhyay's Byomkesh Bakshi and Satyajit Ray's Feluda are one of the popular Indian investigators.

The early nineteenth century to 1960's period was dominated by male oriented crime fiction. This genre was enriched with women investigators by the late twentieth century. Women authors added female perspective to this genre with creating women investigators. They portrayed problems faced by real women in contemporary society. These writers converted the genre according to their own way. This study aims at the development in crime fiction with female writers and investigators of twenty-first century. This study explores the male and female investigators in the crime fiction series created

by modern Indian women writers.

This study includes Shamini Flint's *A Most Peculiar Malaysian Murder (2009)* and *A Curious Indian Cadaver* (2012), Swati Kaushal's *Drop Dead* (2012) and *Lethal Spice* (2014), Madhumita Bhattacharya's *Masala Murder* (2012) and *Dead in a Mumbai Minute* (2014), Kalpana Swaminathan's *Page 3 Murders* (2006) and *I Never Knew It was You* (2012) and Madhulika Liddle's *The Englishman's cameo* (2009) and *Engraved in Stone: A Muzaffar Jang Mystery(2012)*.

1.1 The Statement of the Problem

The genre of crime fiction is popular in society. Its structure makes the reader take interest in the story, follow the detective, participate in the investigation and become one of the protagonists of the novel. Today crime fictions are found in every library, book store and even with every other book lover. Crime fiction is liked globally by the readers. But crime fiction's popularity itself became a hurdle in its study in academic level. Hence it is a less explored area by the researchers. In the early nineteenth century to 1960's period was the period of male dominated crime fiction, where investigators were mainly masculine though written by women writers. This research will focus on how the characters of female detectives and inspectors broke the traditional masculinity and added a female perspective to the investigation in crime fiction. It will focus on the characterization, themes and techniques of crime fiction by Indian English women writers: Shamini Flint, Swati Kaushal, Madhumita Bhattacharya, Kalpana Swaminathan and Madhulika Liddle.

1.2 The Aims and Objectives of the study

1) To get familiarize with the history of crime fiction globally.

2) To study the genre of Indian English crime fiction by Contemporary Indian women writers.

3) To compare the characterization of male and female investigators and to find out similarities and differences between them in their representation in fiction.

4) To find out the techniques of the crime investigations and to find out changes occurred in techniques with the time.

5) To analyze the themes of crime fiction.

6) To study the different roles, attitudes and patterns of behaviors of women in crime fiction: as an investigator or detective, a subordinate, a criminal, a victim etc.

7) To find out pro-feministic notions in crime fiction written by Indian women writers.

1.3 The Rationale of the Study

The genre of crime fiction is popular in society. It's structure makes the reader take interest in the story, follow the detective, participate in the investigation and become one of the protagonists of the novel. Today crime fictions are found in every library, book store and even with every other book lover. But crime fiction's popularity itself became a hurdle in its study in academic level. Hence it is a less explored area by the researchers. In the early nineteenth century to 1960's period was the period of male dominated crime fiction, where investigators were mainly masculine though written by women writers. This research will focus on how the characters of female detectives and inspectors broke the traditional masculinity and added a female perspective to the investigation in crime fiction.

1.4 The Hypothesis of the Study

1) Crime fiction is popular among the book lovers.
2) Crime fiction was male dominated in the early era and women writers eradicated this dominance.
3) Representation of women in Crime Fiction
4) The styles and investigative techniques are different for male and female investigators though written by women writers.
5) The attitudes and behaviors of women change according to their character as an investigator, an assistant, a criminal, a victim etc.
6) Women writers have added pro-feministic values in their works.

1.5 Research Methodology

This study uses analytical and interpretative model which includes traditional and modern methods also. It aims at exploration, critical analysis, interpretative analysis, explication and generalization of crime fiction. It will use primary resources of Indian crime fiction written by women writers Shamini Flint, Swati Kaushal, Madhumita Bhattacharya, Kalpana Swaminathan and Madhulika Liddle. It will use secondary resources like other crime fiction written in India and abroad, critical book reviews, journals, articles, thesis, dissertations along with the websites and so on. It aims at the study of Indian crime fiction through the pro-feminist perspective.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

Crime fiction is one of the most liked genres worldwide. The writing style and investigative techniques vary for the authors of different countries. It is not possible to include each and every crime fiction and study those different

techniques. This research will categorize the history of crime fiction in India and abroad. It is an attempt to find out the writing of crime fiction by women. . It will only focus on the novels of Shamini Flint, Swati Kaushal, Madhumita Bhattacharya, Kalpana Swaminathan and Madhulika Liddle. It will compare the characters of Inspector Singh created by Shamini Flint and Superintendent of Police Niki Marwah created by Swati Kaushal, private investigators Reema Ray created by Madhumita Bhattacharya and Lalli created by Kalpana Swaminathan and in contrast to all these modern investigators it will also study a seventeenth century detective Muzaffar Jung created by Contemporary writer Madhulika Liddle. It will also focus on the other characters especially women characters in these crime fictions. The research will study the use of investigative techniques of these Indian investigators. It will try to find pro-feminism and cotemporary society's values in the crime fictions written by Indian women writers. It will ignore the crime fictions written by male writers and even other works of selected women writers. It will open gates for further research on the topic of crime fiction written by Indian women writers.

1.7 Tentative Chapter Scheme

The current study consists of six chapters:

1. **Chapter one : Introduction**

It will be titled as "Introduction". It will consist an introduction of crime fiction, the statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, the rationale of the study, hypothesis, methodology, the scope of the study and the tentative chapterization. It will deal with the history of crime fiction in India and abroad. It will analyze the gradual change occurred in crime fiction with time. It will focus on how women writes entered into writing crime fictions and made their own place in this male dominated genre. It will introduce crime fictions written by select Indian women writers in pro-feminist perspective.

2. Chapter two : Women in Crime Fiction

It will be titled as “Women in Crime Fiction”. It will deal with the characterization of female investigators, assistants, criminals, victims and other supporting characters. It will compare and contrast female and male investigators. It will try to find pro-feministic notions added by women writers.

3. Chapter three : Investigative Techniques in Crime Fiction

It will be titled as “Investigative Techniques in Crime Fiction”. It will study various techniques used by select Indian women writers. It will find similarities and differences among the techniques of different investigative characters. It will try to generalize investigative techniques in crime fiction.

4. Chapter four : Themes in Crime Fiction

It will be titled as “Themes in Crime Fiction”. It will explore the various themes used in select novels applying various theories.

5. Chapter five : Conclusion

It will be titled as “Conclusion”. It will highlight the conclusions and findings. It will relate crime fiction with the contemporary society. It will sum up with the scope for further research.

The present proposal is tentative and subjected to any later modifications recommended by the supervisor.

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